

Transportation Enhancements 2005

A Question & Answers Funding Primer

Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization

What are transportation enhancements?

The transportation enhancements program is a federal grant program that awards funds to a broad – but very specific – array of project types. Specifically, transportation enhancements include:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles;
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors, including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails;
- Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrian and bicyclists;
- Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites;
- Scenic or historic highway programs including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities;
- Landscaping and other scenic beautification;
- Historic preservation;
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities, including historic railroad facilities and canals;
- Control and removal of outdoor advertising;
- Archaeological planning and research;
- Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity; and
- Establishment of transportation museums.

How much money is available?

The Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization (PRTPO) will award \$783,000 in funding to priority regional projects. The Peninsula RTPO has placed a request limit of \$250,000 for each project. There is no limit for the statewide competitive process, however, the statewide process is highly competitive and only \$8,400,000 is available for the entire state. The Peninsula RTPO will select five projects for statewide competition.

What does the Peninsula RTPO have to do with the federal enhancements program?

As part of its federal and state responsibilities, Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization, or PRTPO, plays an active role in the prioritization and selection of projects for federal funding. The Peninsula RTPO has been responsible for identifying funding priorities that

support the region's transportation goals and contribute to the community's high standard of living. The Peninsula RTPO conducts its own regional prioritization and selection process and submits its list of funding recommendations to the State for those projects to receive a transportation enhancements grant.

Do I use the same application for the Peninsula RTPO regional and Washington statewide transportation enhancements funding requests?

Yes, to apply for either the regional enhancements grants or the statewide competitive grants, you need to fill out the Peninsula RTPO regional application and the statewide Transportation Enhancements Report form.

Is a local match still required for the transportation enhancements grants?

No, this year there is no local match requirement for the Peninsula RTPO regional or statewide competitive enhancements grants – 100% enhancements funding.

If we are awarded an enhancements grant, how soon do we need to start or compete our project?

The complete project or the specific phase of the project, which you are requesting funds for must begin within the first year from the date of the enhancements award.

How do I know if my project idea is eligible for federal funds?

You can get an initial sense of whether you have an eligible project proposal by looking at the list of allowed transportation enhancements activities. However, applicants should review details of their proposal with staff from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for further clarification. The fine nuances of federal requirements can render critical elements of a seemingly good proposal ineligible for funding. It is much better to identify and address eligibility issues during the application development stage than to be disqualified late in the process. *Even if your proposal is selected by the Peninsula RTPO, if it is ineligible under federal guidelines you will not receive transportation enhancements funds.*

Applicants are strongly encouraged to verify project eligibility prior to submitting a proposal to the Peninsula RTPO. Please contact **BRIAN MOOREHEAD** at the WSDOT Olympic Region by phone at 360.357.2712 or by email at moorehb@wsdot.wa.gov.

What kinds of projects usually get funded?

The Peninsula RTPO has typically found bicycle and pedestrian projects to be the highest funding priority for transportation enhancements. In considering the backlog of unmet transportation needs across the region, expenditures on bicycle and pedestrian projects have tended to yield the greatest community benefit for the limited enhancements funds the Peninsula RTPO has available to award and have been most supportive of established goals and policies.

However, the Peninsula RTPO has been advised that WSDOT would prefer that the federal transportation enhancements program extends eligibility to a wide array of projects

What is a “CA” agency and why do I need one?

A “CA,” or Certification Acceptance agency, is one that is authorized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to administer these transportation enhancements funds. Because there are federal transportation funds, they have to be spent in a way that fully meets many different requirements regarding the environment, design and construction specifications, equal employment opportunities, disadvantaged business enterprises, bid processes, billing and accounting, and many other elements. It has been said that federal transportation grants are easier to get than to spend. A CA agency has demonstrated to FHWA that it is capable of complying with these aspects of its federally funded projects.

The reason you need to have a CA agency is that FHWA will not allow you to use transportation enhancements funds for your project without one. This is something over which the Peninsula RTPO has no control. You must identify who your CA agency will be prior to submitting your application for regional funding.

Where will I find a CA agency?

There are a handful of CA agencies within the Olympic Peninsula Region. Peninsula jurisdictions with CA status include Clallam, Jefferson, and Mason Counties and the cities of Port Angeles, Port Townsend, and Shelton. The WSDOT Olympic Region office may also administer eligible projects.

Federal and state laws don’t require any local jurisdiction to serve as CA agency for any other agency or organizations.

How will project proposals be reviewed?

All project proposals will go through several rounds of review.

First, all proposals will be reviewed by the Peninsula RTPO staff for completeness, feasibility, and federal eligibility. Then the proposals will be reviewed and scored by the Peninsula Enhancements Advisory Committee (PEAC) made up of representatives from the Peninsula RTPO; this review and scoring meeting will take place on September 22nd & 23rd. Project proponents will be required to make mini presentations to the PEAC committee at this scoring meeting. The PEAC committee will score and select regional projects and five statewide competitive projects. After enhancement projects have been scored and selected by the PEAC committee, the committee chair will present the proposed project selections to the Peninsula Policy Board/Executive Council for their approval on September 30, 2005.

Project proponents are encouraged to attend the enhancements workshop on August 9, 2005 to ask questions or clarify unclear information before submitting their applications. The enhancements workshop will be held during the first hour of the Peninsula RTPO Technical Advisory Committee meeting at the Washington State University Extension of Jefferson County, conference room at 10:00 am. The address for WSU Extension is 201 W. Patison, Port Hadlock, WA 98339, Tel. 360-379-5610.

When will I know if my project got funded?

Recipients of a regional award will be fairly certain of their funding status after the Peninsula RTPO Policy Board/Executive Meeting on September 30, 2005. Both Peninsula RTPO regional and the statewide competitive projects, which are selected will be submitted to WSDOT no later than November 1, 2005. Those projects submitted for consideration in the statewide competitive process should be selected sometime in January 2006. Funding for any proposal – regional or statewide – is subject to approval by WSDOT.

If my project is selected, will the Peninsula RTPO give me the money to do the work?

No, because transportation enhancements grants are a “reimbursement” type of grant. That is, you don’t receive any money up front to do the work; instead you are reimbursed for eligible projects costs after you complete the work to the standards required by FHWA and submit your project billing to WSDOT. Once the projects are selected, sponsors will work directly with WSDOT on contract agreements and billing procedures. The Peninsula RTPO does not play any role in the billing or reimbursement of project costs.

Does all the work have to be completed in 2006?

No, projects selected for funding don’t have to be completed in 2006. However, it is in the very strong interest of regional, state and federal agencies to see work initiated on projects “sooner” rather than “later” so that the public benefits from these grants as soon as possible.

Can someone exchange my federal grant with non-federal funds?

Unlike some other federal transportation grants, WSDOT has determined that transportation enhancements grants can’t be exchanged for non-federal funds. That means that if you receive an enhancements grant for your project, the project will have to be done with that grant.

What are the main differences between the Peninsula RTPO process and the statewide process?

While 80% of the State’s transportation enhancements funds are being allocated through regional processes established by agencies like Peninsula RTPO, WSDOT will determine funding priorities for the remaining 20% of funds, or roughly \$8.4 million. WSDOT established a special Enhancements Advisory Committee for the purpose of determining statewide funding priorities.

At this time it is unclear how statewide priorities will be determined by the committee. Previously, statewide priorities were determined using score-based results. Those weighted criteria will not be used in this grant process. Applicants interested in participating in the statewide process should check the WSDOT website for information as it becomes available at:

www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/ProgMgt/Grants/Enhance.htm

Do I have to go through the Peninsula RTPO to apply for a statewide grant?

With few exceptions you do need to go through the regional prioritization process to be eligible for consideration in the statewide competitive process. The Enhancements Advisory Committee limited the number of proposals that can be submitted from this region to five, which are to be prioritized by the Peninsula RTPO. The exception to this is any proposal that includes components within two or more counties. Those proposals are not considered to be “regional” in nature and can be submitted directly without going through the Peninsula RTPO process. Please see the website, above, for more information.

Will transportation enhancements grants ever be awarded again?

Yes, enhancements grants will be awarded again. Most likely there will be a similar call for projects in 2006 or 2007, which will probably be the last call until 2009 or 2010.

Can I download the regional application?

Yes, the application and other materials are available on PRTPO website at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/partners/prtpo>

Can I submit an application to the Peninsula RTPO for statewide consideration but not regional?

Yes, the application form includes a check box that allows you to submit a proposal to be considered as one of the five statewide competitive priorities while not being evaluated for regional funding. A sponsor may want to do this for a variety of reasons, such as a request for funds totaling as much or more than is available in the regional allocation or because the project does not include elements that will make it compete well regionally. Please note that the Peninsula RTPO has decided to place a request cap for regional enhancement projects at \$250,000. Project requests for more than that amount should be considered for the statewide competitive process.

Can I get partial funding from a regional grant and then apply for a statewide grant?

This is not a recommended strategy. There is no guarantee that a project submitted for funding at the state level will receive a grant. The Peninsula RTPO would be hesitant to make an award of regional funds to a project that will then require a subsequent award of state funding for the project to proceed. This kind of strategy would tend to relegate that project to a lower regional funding priority. Applicants should not expect to be offered “partial funding” for their proposals.

What kind of information will I need for my application packet?

In addition to a good, one page project description, application packets need to include cost and revenue information, proposed timelines, CA agency information, letters of commitment from financial partners, and a signature from someone authorized to obligate the agency or organization to the proposal described. In addition, savvy applicants will include vicinity maps, letters of community support or other forms of endorsements, drawings or graphic renderings, and any other evidence that demonstrates the value of the project.

I still have questions. Where can I get more information?

For information on eligible transportation enhancements activities and administration requirements, please contact Brian Moorehead at the WSDOT Olympic Region (357.2712 or moorehb@wsdot.wa.gov). For more information on the statewide competitive process visit the WSDOT website at www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/ProgMgt/Grants/Enhance.htm. For more information on the Peninsula RTPO’s regional prioritization process, contact Patrick Babineau by phone at 360.357.2675 or by email at babinep@wsdot.wa.gov

Is there a Peninsula RTPO website where I can access the RTPO application?

Yes, the Peninsula RTPO website includes links to the WSDOT Highways and Local Programs website as listed above and includes its own enhancements links for the Peninsula RTPO’s Regional Transportation Plan, Goals and Policies Section, Enhancements Schedule, Peninsula RTPO’s Regional Enhancements Criteria, Peninsula RTPO s Enhancements Application, Statewide Enhancements Report Form, and this Enhancements Question & Answer sheet. at: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/partners/prtpo/>